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# The new workers

migration, labour and citizenship in Northern Ireland in the 21st century

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Supported by Independent Workers Union and University of Strathclyde.

Booklet published by the Consensus Initiative of Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre, 45-47 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2FG.

[www.achieve-consensus.org](http://www.achieve-consensus.org)

## Introduction

**Welcome** to our booklet that is the fruit of eight months work by the Migrant Workers Action Research Network; a group of people from seven nationalities who came together to, in the words of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, "help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which we seek to transform" (Freire, 1973). Along the themes of migration, work and family life, questions were designed, study groups set up and delivered by migrant and local workers in cafes, community centres, fast food car parks, kitchens and living rooms. People were asked about their experiences, and invited to become involved as the work, importantly, seeks to build knowledge, share ideas and encourage participation towards meaningful social change. We live in a society that needs fixing and we hope this effort is a humble but sincere step in the right direction. And we welcome you to get involved.

**Migrant Workers Action Research Network, February 2011.**

## Research, interviews, and film by the Research Network team:

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People move for different reasons, necessity, safety, to follow a dream, to see the world and, of course, to work. People do not typically arrive in the north with a fully fledged view of the politics and the geographies of the conflict even when they tell us that in some instances family and friends, whether in Africa, the Philippines, South America or Eastern Europe would raise doubts about security in "Ireland". Contacts with a friend or family or the active recruitment of people, typically by agencies is a stronger force than these warnings. More of than not, therefore, the north is less the choice- rather it was the option 'given'.

# Moving here





## Moving here

**“ I couldn't find work in Poland because I was “too old” for the employers so I talk to my friend and we decided to come to Ireland. We got a flight to Dublin and we knew a man in Newry who said he would help us a bit at the beginning. First night after we came (with £100 in our pocket for the both of us) we spent on the Dublin airport in a terrible rain. Next day we took a bus to Newry and we had met a Polish man who told us that if we come to Armagh he would help us to find a place to stay and possibly a work. So we went to Armagh. The man helped us to find a flat and he told the landlord that we had only arrived and we don't have much money. The landlord helped us to find a work.**

*Marek, Poland*

**“ In Brazil you have a big dream, you think you come to Europe, you're going to get lots of money, but then you arrive here and everything is different. Nowadays for me, it's just surviving here, its almost as if I was living in Brazil...A neighbour of ours in Brazil, she was working here, but she wouldn't bring any more cos she already brought loads, but we convinced her to bring us. I thought it was just farms here, where am I going to, where's the city?**

*Tiago, Brazil*

**“ The agency came to the Philippines to get nurses; you had to apply but it was difficult, it's not easy to get accepted.**

*Marian, Philippines*

**“ I had come over to visit friends a few times when I was living in Glasgow, and liked it.**

*Andrew, Ghana*

**“ I didn't know anything about Ireland, just priests and bishops...that's all I had heard ...I'm from the Amazon basin, and we get lots of priests there on the mission.**

*Brazil*

**“ First the agency in Lithuania was contacted by the farm to bring people over to work and that's how we first came; after that people were asked by the owner to bring friends or family to the factory to work.**

*Marta, Lithuania*

**“ My life got complicated and I had to find some solutions. My daughter was here already so I came and work for 2.5 years... Then I got my other daughter to come ... I have to think about my children to get them educated.**

*Teresa, Poland*

**“ I had a dream to build a house for my parents and I did that in three years, sending money every month, and now I want to live here.**

*Marcello, Brazil*

**“ I came to work for the summer in a factory to save some money to by a stereo... that was eight years ago!**

*Andrius, Lithuania*

**“ When I arrived here, it was on the 12 July, I arrived and got stuck. I phoned my mother. Hey, are you in Dublin? No I'm in Belfast? What? Why do you always go to the places where people don't want to go? Why didn't you just go to Palestine?**

*Ben, Holland.*

**“ I found the advertisement in paper, 3 week English course in Poland and after that they will find you a job. This agency they told us, we can get you a job. I signed my contract in Poland and wanted to go to London. But my first offer was here, in Armagh -I ticked a box- my friend and me said there is no point to wait. So they come in Poland and interviewed us in PolandI had to sign a contract for one year to work in a care home.** *Jowita, Poland*

**“ I was sent here from different farm in England so coming here I had a job to go to...I came here on the 12th and went to work on 13th It was similar in my case. We came here from England and all what was talked about before we came was IRA and bombs. But what it is really like in here I only came to know when I started to live here**

*Joanna, Poland*

**“ \_\_\_\_ Recruitment Agency was looking for welders back in Poland it was before we joined the EU. They got a fellow recruited from a factory where I worked. He went and then few others and few more and it went like a snow ball. I came too.**

*Tomasz, Poland*

**“ When I first came here to visit I was pregnant. My husband lived in a beautiful house with big trees around. And the house was absolutely freezing all the time. I used to make myself a hot cup of tea and go and stand on the sunny side of the street to warm myself up. I came from summery Poland when I spent time on the beach. In October there were pines falling all the time I was afraid to leave the child outside in case he would get a whack. And there were leaves everywhere with big worms leaving underneath and crawling everywhere.**

*Katarzyna, Poland*

# Work

People carry with them stories, from the construction sites and factory floors, to the rooms of hotel and care homes, the call centres and agency desks, where many migrant workers, despite often having qualifications or occupational skill beyond their job duty, share a determination to get on



“ I came here with no language. And I went to look for work with wee piece of paper. I came on Friday. Now listen to this; a friend gave us a tour of the city. He showed us shops and all. We have seen a building site across the road from hospital. I went there on Monday with a wee piece of paper. I couldn't even remember how to say “I am looking for work”. So I had this wee piece of paper that read “I am looking for job”. I showed it to a man and he said something. I didn't know what he is saying so he written on the same piece of paper, “Come in tomorrow about 8”. So I was looking for work for three hours. It is harder now. I can't imagine coming now and trying the same. It is impossible. They want the ones that can speak English. They are choosing now.

Karol, Poland

“ I came here to work, I'm not fussy; if you won't do the cleaning jobs well I have to support my family, I'll do a cleaning job.

Sherley, Liberia

“ I looked for work for 2.5 weeks. I filled the applications forms for various companies and I was told “wait we will get back to you” and so they had. I got my first job and my phone never quitted. It was “come and work for me” all the time.

Daniel, Poland

“ I have attempted various simple aptitude tests with interviews all the time and passing the aptitude tests and even the person interviewing me says that I have a better education than them... I went to \_\_\_\_ one day for a test, very simple, like 2+2 and drawing a diagram, and I did everything completely and the guy came out and said 'sorry, you haven't been selected, you didn't pass the test'. It really was a simple test ...and I have post graduate diploma.. from here!

Ismail, Nigeria.

**People** came willing to work and are, therefore, not simply 'victims' of unscrupulous employers. In relation to the economy of the north, they have certainly also have been part of a 'golden years' of wealth creation in western Europe and US: jobs have been created where none existed or in circumstances that are often not favoured by native born workers:

“ When we first came we were given all the hours and we wanted them.

“ I hear people complaining black people are taking our jobs; but to be honest I don't think a lot of people want to do the jobs they are doing... when I came in 1999, when I came here there were jobs that local people did not want to do like cleaning, care assistants. They would not do it. But when they saw Black people and Polish people doing it they got offended. .. I used to work in I cleaning company but I left because the girl I worked with was very abusive, she used to say “you come to work here and you think this is your country, this is not your country...”

Sherley, Liberia

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**Between** 1998-2008, Northern Ireland was the fastest growing region of the UK economy, with 10,000 jobs created each year (DETI, 2009).

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“ I had an incident with a fellow in a pub. He shouted that I came here and took his job. But I think that he would never want the job I am doing. Definitely not for the same money I am getting. If he even worked in his life at all as he looked like an alcoholic. I am sure some people think bad things about us because there are some gossips going around every now and then. But in general once people get to know you they have different attitude.

Piotr, Poland

“ When I see those signs, British jobs for British people, I look away, I don't want to see that

Diana, Lithuania

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**Both** work and community are linked as we emphasise later but what is often ignored is the link between exploitation in rent and exploitation in work. A housing boom, vital to the rest of the 'golden' era of money making is frequently overlooked:

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Polish people coming here in such a big number made locals a lot of money. Some locals were buying houses and renting them out to foreigners. That is how they paid their mortgages off.

Tomasz, Poland

“ I think one out of three houses were rented to foreigners in the estate.

Gosia, Poland

“ We'd like a proper job...where at the end of each week I would know how much I would get; with the agency you never know. Normally people working through the agency have shifts... the people working for the agency boss are Slovakian, Polish, guys who live in his house, so they prefer these people when the agency needs people. We work Friday, Saturday and Sunday, normally, we just work when they call us but the boss makes sure work at least two shifts each week, because this is enough money for the rent, and he owns the house.  
Tiago, Brazil.

“ Under globalisation, and 'neoliberalism' – the particular economic project of the 1980s and 90s that did provide this wealth for some- global inequalities that drive migration have been hard to ignore:  
I've just come back from Nigeria. There are loads of westerners working in Africa, having a ball there, having a laugh; but ...BBC is not showing that ... Africa is not this no go area; ... if they want to do it properly why not show our oil they are stealing; every blessed bean ; they are stealing the oil to give people a better life over here...so I know what is going on in the world; we suffer for you to live a better life here; ...and I'm including myself in that because I live here now, people over there pay for it; our comfort over here; they pay for it. The farmer that plant the cocoa, to make chocolate; he can't afford the chocolate. The diamonds, the cocoa, the oil..come on.  
Kin, Nigeria.

**global** labour supply increased 4 times in the period of globalisation (IMF, 2007)

And the resulting wage differences the world over can have an effect on how people view work here, even when very difficult.

“ Nowadays for me, it's just surviving here; it's almost as if I was living in Brazil.  
But the difference is that ...here you can work for the week and you can pay your bills, in Brazil you work a month and it's hard to pay them. Marcelo, Brazil

“ I am not discriminated against for any reason. Working is physical and hard but I am only a cog in a machine. I have to do what I am told.  
Bartosz, Poland.

**Migrant** jobs for Migrant people?  
Frustrations can set in when highly skilled qualifications mean precious little and

employers don't recognise a person's occupational skill. People are knocked back in cases without explanation; the rejected applicant understands the regulations better than the employer, or on occasion, even when they are actually successful in interview, the 'offer' is withdrawn for a range of reasons.

“ Once I applied for a job and passed the interview, but they called me back and told me that I did very well in the interview but they had been told I couldn't work...When I called the lady from the Home Office, she told me to “go home” ...but (after challenging her) then she said she wasn't sure of what was I entitled to. So she called the company back because she had given them the wrong information, but obviously, no company wants to get involved in with anything immigration...the next week they said that I did very well but somebody with more experience had got the job. Student, Nigeria

“ My husband is a dentist at home but just last week applied for a job in a care home and at the interview they said 'welcome aboard', so they mean 'you've got the job'. So my husband was very happy, even though the salary was only £5.95. But then we received a letter that said 'I'm sorry, but you have not passed the interview you have not got the qualifications'. I thought 'that's ridiculous' and my husband was so upset. Normally we would just accept it but I thought this time 'we have the right to ask why'. So my husband rang and asked and they apologized ...and they explained that he HAD got the job but there were no night nurse jobs available at the moment. Before I had no idea that we could say anything so we just accepted it. I know foreign people here that have studied for four or five years and are licensed engineers and where are they working? In McDonalds. Marian, Philippines.

“ Was working as a waitress but now I am unemployed, find it's really hard to find a job. I send lots of cvs but not even a reply. Then a week ago I got a letter saying I could not come for an interview because of my nationality. I sent a letter back asking why? Maybe they got afraid and so they invited me for the interview now, but even still they asked me to sign a letter from someone who knows me for two years, but nobody here knows me for that long...so I am going to the interview without this. Ju, Brazil.

“ I'm going to simple tests all the time and passing them and even the person interviewing me says that I have a better education than them... I went to \_\_\_\_ one day to a test, very simple, like 2+2



and drawing a diagram, and I did everything completely and the guy comes out and said 'sorry, you haven't been selected, you didn't pass the test'. It really was a simple test ...and I have post graduate diploma... from here! Ismail, Nigeria

**“ Back home I was a camera operator on TV and I have courses on camera and video production but I have never been able to work in those kind of jobs here, and all the good jobs I've found is because I know Spanish, like in call centre, and the only English speaking jobs I've found have been working in a pub and cleaning. Raquel, Spain.**

**This** means people are forced to go for and accept jobs for which they would, as local workers, be considered overqualified...and join what has been termed a 'migrant division of labour (Wills et al., 2010).

**“ When we first arrived we went to one English class, but didn't go back, because most people at work were Portuguese. Ignes, Brazil**

**“** Russian is very useful! I have to say that when I came here I had thought I had some basic English I would work with English speaking people I would learnt few new words a week so I would learnt English quickly. I started my work on the farm and as turned out I had to refresh quickly all the Russian that I had learnt 9 – 10 years ago and it came very handy! Barbara, Poland.

**“ I worked through an agency, in the big supermarkets. The Irish workers were full time staff. The agency workers were Russian, Polish, Romanian, Brazilian and it was ok, but we did the heavy work, and nights. Dan, Romania.**

**In** workplaces across the north, the language difficulties facing workers, a scant attention to employment law by employers and unscrupulous agencies some of the worst exploitation has raised its head. That they have been underpaid – and often not paid at all - often without trade union representation and in poor conditions of employment (all are linked, of course) is also central to the dynamic of economic and community exploitation.

**“ We were told we had to sign a form if we wanted to work here. We weren't told what it was; we just had to sign it. We found out later that's**

**why we don't get over time pay, and we work 60-70 hours a week. Inga, Lithuania.**

**“** I work legally but I can't get a contract because my boss can't tell me how many hours I work or on what position and God forbid to what breaks I am entitled or if I can go to the toilet. It is not even about the motivation as I might need a contract to get a mortgage... I am just not getting one! Joanna, Poland.

**“ I know some Lithuanian guys came across from Scotland to work on a building site; they went there one day and said, 'no way, we're going back to Scotland!' Andrius, Lithuania**

**“** I remember I was working 120 hours in one week, and 44 hours non stop, non stop! It was like, work, home, sleep a few hours, work, home, sleep. Vilhelmas, Lithuania

**“ I think I've had about 5 different jobs, but I never had a contract, my bosses would tell me how many days of holidays I would have and staff like that.**

**“** I have just above a minimal wage but if you are a good picker you can get a bonus. At the start we worked 3 weeks day shift and 1 week night shift. We worked 7,8,9 days "until done" which means that we could have finished at midnight or 2 AM and next day start again at 7AM. Dominika, Poland

**“ Me, I don't work because there's no job, but looking for a job is like working; it's harder. If you're looking for a job you get tired like you're working. I am a construction worker, but I don't even care about that now I just want a job so I can say that I am working. Kofi, Ghana**

**“** Our problem is documentation, without the right documentation we can't look for other job; if I had the papers it would be easy to get a job. Tiago, Brazil

**“ Two years ago a new manager started. Maybe because she wasn't Irish. She was using communistic rules typical for gulag in Siberia. Literally, if she was in bad mood she could have taken up to 10 people for disciplinary report. For her the best employee should have at least two written disciplinary reports. Such person would be very quiet for the fear of losing the job. Intimidated. Justyna, Poland**



“ It's just this thing happened once in my work place (care home), me and two other girls, one from Nigeria and one from Ghana, had been working night shift from 8pm to 8 am, and we finished our shift and one of the patients was very ill, and we were asked to bring the patient to the hospital, but we replied to the nurse that we couldn't because we had to bring our kids to school and why couldn't they ask somebody that had just started their shift. ..so a manager called us saying that there had been a complaint because we were told to bring a patient to hospital and we refused. So I explained what happened, my shift was over and the morning people were in. If it had happened in the middle of my shift I would have brought the patient myself, but they asked me when I was going home. Few weeks after we received a letter saying that we were fired and we weren't allowed to come back...we know that that wasn't fair, but I couldn't be bothered, I just left it...and it was us started up the care home in the first place! Ann, Liberia

“ This boy from Romania, he was given shifts (in the care home) that I don't think a local worker would be asked to do, and a Chinese girl, she was asked to work from 9pm to 11pm then 8am till late the next day. The girl she said, I don't want to work like this, but the manager said, “You can do it!” Kristina, Poland

**Where** migrants have found themselves working alongside Irish people the experiences have been varied:

“ Sometimes it was scary because the man was up on the third floor on the scaffolding and shouted; put the brick in the bucket! I was on the ground and didn't have a clue what he wanted. So this man in his sixties had to get down from the scaffolding, he through the brick in my bucket and had to climbed back up. He was patient. Sometimes it was funny, sometimes scary; sometimes he was losing his grip. It was hard. But I was learning the language fast. Give me this, handle me that. I started from scratch. Karol, Poland.

“ There are work places if you are black they don't want to talk to you, they don't want to share things with you, they want you to get mad, that's what they use, they want to provoke you the way they look at you, call you some names..., like why are you doing the same job as us... so you will do something ...you feel like... arggh. ..and then they will get you. Like I have met some really, really nice people, down to earth nice people, but it's a few,

only just a few, but of you are not strong enough they can push you to the wall. Kin, Nigeria

“ Irish people are very good people, you can't compare with others. I work with Irish people and I think it's just their culture, they're really good people; even the manager she was really good with me. The Irish, usually it's difficult to see any of them working on the (production) line, usually they're like managers. Marcello, Brazil

“ I left my job because whilst other people would cook a bit and do other things in the kitchen apart from dishes, but in my case I was only doing dishes, and it's not that the other people were more qualified than me. I didn't feel racism from other co-workers but the racism is in the way that I have not been given the opportunity to be promoted. Ade

“ My father was working for this company, big company. He was working as a kitchen porter; he is an agriculture graduate but wouldn't give him a job in that line. When he went to work no one would speak to him, no one would have lunch with him, they would laugh at him. They would go and collect all the dishes that were clean and put them with the dirty ones, and they put knives inside the hot water. One time he cut himself and called home to say he couldn't stay at work, he was so frustrated; my daddy is a very, very gentle natured person, I never saw him angry, he never raised his voice, but for the first time I saw him like angry, so mad, he got in the car and just drove away.

...I was working in, do you know \_\_\_\_ drinks company, I was working there, and a Polish guy who came, he was new, he didn't know anyone, the first time I went into the canteen, he sat there with a novel at lunch time. People came in they all sat round and didn't even say hello to him or anything. Second day, same thing, third day same things. And like he was getting in to the truck to work with people every day. After a few days I went over to him and asked him, 'Hello, how are you, where are you from? He told me he was Polish, I asked him, why are you sitting here by yourself,' Sherley, Liberia.

**Neoliberalism** has seen a dramatic rise in temporary contracts, and with more intensive work accompanied by increased insecurity; more mundane tasks replacing valued work and 'flexible' working hours requiring the employee to work longer and harder when needed. Indeed this has led to observers talking about a new 'class' of worker

emerging; the 'precariat' (Standing, 2009), owing to the precarious – unsure- nature of modern working life.

My last job was shift work-one week 30 hours, some weeks you turn up work for an hour and a half and send you home; you have to get a bus, half an hour, work an hour, and sent home . **Ju, Brazil**

**There** has been a 360% increase in casual, temporary and part time work in last 10 years in UK. Adecco, the agency, now has 700,000 people on its books; one of the world's biggest private employers)

“ **Another thing I find is that you don't have much responsibilities in work here and there are so many bosses for each worker, when it's actually the workers who move the company and I understand now why it's like this, it's because it's more controlled... but when you don't have many responsibilities it's more like you're a robot, you do this and this and this and there's no creativity, no nothing. My manager actually had another five managers above him so it's not like I go to my managers and I get an answer.**  
**Raquel, Spain**

“ At the moment I just don't care about work, it's not the job I want to do, I would even take less pay to be doing the job I'm trained for, the job I want. I would get up in the morning happy that I'm going to work but at the moment I just don't care. **Ismail, Nigeria**

“ **I worked at a large supermarket chain but it was through an agency. Most of the local people would be directly employed and most of the foreign people would be employed through an agency and would be paid less, and also we would be made to work on the night shift and the local people would just do the day shift.** **Gedi, Lithuania**

“ Now I work through the agency...suddenly the telephone rings you have to go to the factory. We get minimum wages, no holiday pay, no rights, then our breaks are discounted-2 hours, You don't get paid overtime or extra- they just find a way to pay you less. Last week again I got paid less, I looked for the guy to complain, the guy does the accounts but I couldn't find him; he always pays less. **Tiago, Brazil**

“ **My first job was through \_\_\_\_\_ agency, in Armagh and Dungannon, anywhere. One of the**

**places I worked wanted me to work for them. But there was some problem. My agency boss told me I can't go because there was some small writing in my contract with the agency that when I finish the work then the company must pay the agency some money for me, because of something I had signed...I didn't have translator when I signed this...'short'..'contract'. ...Now I'm Bank staff but we don't have contract hours...if care home needs someone then the bank staff will do them, as they cost less than the agency..there are a lot of bank staff now ..I get holiday pay based on the hours of work, but I don't know if I get maternity pay.** **Paulena, Poland**

“ Before I had a job that when I worked after 6pm and before 8am they paid me more, I think it was 20 percent extra because it was in unsociable hours but I've been applying for same kind of jobs and they don't seem to say anything about extra pay anymore, they just say you can be working from this to this time and the pay will be this, and that's all. **Raquel, Spain**

“ **When I started cleaning, you got £8, £9 an hour for a cleaning job, it was a good job, now everyone wants to do it and you get like, £5-6 an hour**  
**, Sherley, Liberia**

“ Now we have to work harder than last year, because we have the same work but less staff. Or they give us less hour to work but they give us more rooms to clean. We are understaffed and nobody wants to work here because it's too hard. **Inga, Lithuania**

“ **To me, if it's somewhere where you are like all the time, like at work, in your place of work, you get up in the morning and you go there, and your having problems, you know that also affects you when you go home, you don't have peace; every time you go to work you think, God, I'm going back to this.** **Sherley, Liberia**

“ **Foreigners find it very hard to complain; it's like your just complaining, you want to hold the job, and if you lose that job it is so hard to find another job...and so its very hard just taking something like that.** **Kin, Nigeria**

# Unions

Of course, migrant workers, like workers everywhere, have found ways to speak out, resist and organise. However, while trade unions are ordinarily assumed to be vital to workers whatever their circumstances, this can only really begin to have relevance where unions exist, and where their role goes beyond recruiting members. In many instances and notably in the experience of many migrant workers, trade unions are simply absent. Where they are present, conditions have been 'getting better', and in many cases, it has been migrant workers, despite threats from managers, have taken the steps to secure rights for all staff, native born or otherwise.



## Unions

**“ I was told by a manager in a call centre that us foreigners are always protesting for our rights, but, yeah, of course we are, because we know our rights. But my boyfriend has told me that the way people are here at work they just get on with it. Raquel, Spain**

**“ In these places (like in the cleaning job) I didn't have a contract, I didn't know about my holidays or my sick pay, I had to ask other people about it. Like I had a problem on my back and they asked me to come and cover my work, like if they didn't care about me, I felt used as an instrument. Somebody told me I should go to the Citizen Advisor to find out if I was entitled to sick pay. So I said to my boss I thought I should have sick pay, but still then I didn't get this right, so I thought this wasn't a secure place for me to work. I found this job because my father used to work there and when my father left, I left. In none of my jobs I heard of a union. I wasn't even aware of my rights. Even when I was made redundant somebody told me I could get redundancy money. Sherley, Liberia**

**“ Before I was in a private care home and the boss just did what she liked but now I am in NHS and the union is there and things are so much better; they write to you, tell you to call them with any problems. Renata, Lithuania**

**“ The manager found union applications forms in the factory. He shut down the machines and called everyone and asked, what's this? He said the company had solicitors and warned people about joining. He said you had to work there for two years before you could join. Some people were afraid to join. Some others did and now we have contracts (they're different to the English ones!) and we are still there. A.R, Lithuania.**

**“ The situation with the universities would suggest that the unions are very weak. The cuts, they were just announced yesterday, are massive. Susel, Brazil**

**“ I'm not in a union; my wife's in one. They just take her money. Bart, Poland**

**“ I've never joined a union. I don't even know the name of one. Alvina, Brazil**

**“ I used to be in union back in the days down south. I like the unions; they fight for your rights. They try and do the right thing, not for the big wigs. Kin, Nigeria.**

**“ I worked first in an apple factory, then different cleaning jobs in restaurants, bars, then worked in kitchens, until I was a chef...but never knew of a union in work and was never asked to join one. Andrius, Lithuania**

**“ I'm sorry to say but some of the unions are somehow corrupt, I have this experience in my own country too and there are some that please the managers and some that fight for you. Marian, Philippines**

**“ What is a trade union? ... Oh, aye, I remember a girl from work that asked for advice and she had a group that helped her. Is that what it is? Yes, this is the only time I've heard of it, (after 12 years) she told me about it. Ann, Liberia**

**“ What is that? Is it like an agency? Dan, Romania**

**“ Another thing that I have found is that, since I brought the union to a meeting I had at work, I was convinced that if I applied for another job in the company I wouldn't get it which I didn't and they didn't even get back to me at all. In Spain it's something normal to ask for your rights and if you do they're not going to see you in a bad way, or if you are involved in a union but I see here that if you are, it's like 'oh this person is going to bring trouble'. I don't know if that's the culture here; that if you're in a union they think you're going to be too feisty...workers here tend to compete rather than co-operate with each other. Raquel, Spain.**

**“ At the start we worked 3 weeks day shift and 1 week night shift. We worked 7, 8, 9 days "until done" which means that we could have finished (mushrooms) at midnight or 2 AM and next day start again at 7AM. With only one day off. ...It is trade union improvement that there is no more work "until it is done" ... Slowly in small steps we are getting the same treatment Irish workers would get. Whatever is in employment law we are slowly getting put into practice. Before we never got bank holidays paid for. It was the first issue trade union dealt with. They even paid us back for past Christmas. In July! Dominika, Poland**

**“ Sometimes there are some people with a strong personality but I'm not that type. Sometimes here I would just cry in the corner but back home I'm not like that; I would fight for it but not here. It's probably because I'm afraid that something would happen. I'm so lucky that now I've got the union to help me but before I would have been afraid going anywhere. Marian, Philippines.**



“ I was a member of trade union in Poland Solidarnosc. But I wasn't active. Here life taught me to be active. We had enough of our manager. And we were there from the start and we knew what was going on and that somewhere wages were better or conditions were better. I am shop steward here. Joanna, Poland

“ **I never heard of a trade union, not even when I was in the call centre. It was just customer service.** Ismail, Nigeria.

“ There was no union at work. Nobody had contracts but we joined the union. The manager heard some people had joined and shouted and said he would find out who had joined. But after some time we told him we wanted contracts and now everything is much better. I believe that if you want something and you know you are right, you should go and get it. We didn't lose our jobs. People shouldn't be afraid. We got contracts for everyone, even the Irish workers, for almost 200 people. Gosia, Poland



## Social life, family and community

The idea that the north of Ireland is a welcoming place for those coming to work and live from different cultures has been sorely tested and often found wanting in the last twenty years. Being 'a great wee place' was easy rhetoric when we only had 'ourselves' and 'our own' to contend with. While there are hopeful signs of some change over time, what

the experience of migrant workers and their families tells us is that while many find generous communities and, certainly in contrast to other experiences in the UK context, sometimes uncommon support, the existing, typically sectarian, divisions in our society are revealed time and again.

## Social life, family and community

“ In 1994 I'd walk down town in Lisburn and not see anybody of different colour, or from a different country but now it's much more common to see foreigners...the people were fine with us, they had a problem with each other you could see, but they were fine with us. Marcio, Brazil.

“ When I came there was a lot of racism towards us because there were not a lot black people here. I was lucky I had three sisters at the same school so I had someone to talk to, it was terrible back then. I went to a school in East Belfast. We would go home and tell our father what happened at school and then he and my mother would talk with the principal... They would tell us everything would be ok, and they would tell the other party to stop it but it still carried on outside school on the way home. I have children now and it is better, they get a bit of racism but I am not worried about them, it's much better. We still live in the same area in East Belfast. Ann, Liberia

“ “I haven't experienced anything like racism here. Marek, Poland

“ Whenever I came here I was living on Shaws road which is Gaeltacht of Belfast where everybody knows everybody, like a wee circle , a wee family , I didn't see any bombs, I didn't see anything, I didn't speak English, I didn't watch TV ...the only thing I was concerned with was when I was walking down the street, kids would say, “Mummy she's brown! That was it”. Now walking down the street, nobody looks at me, there's black guys up and down, so I suppose there was a change but I was protected in my wee bubble in west Belfast...my kids play with the children across the street and that's it, no problems... it's a small community, everyone knows each other, the girls play across the street. Alvina, Brazil

“ In Newtownards I know a lot of Lithuanian people. Our neighbours are local and they are very nice, they invite us to their parties and all. I would socialize more with Lithuanians but also with some locals in Newtownards. Jurate, Lithuania

“ People here are really, really friendly. Diana, Lithuania

“ They're polite; if you bump into them they say sorry, not like at home. We play football with Irish people, they say hello on the street but we wouldn't go to each others houses- the African people from Angola, our neighbours from Mozambique, we would go to each others houses. The African's treat us well but they speak also our language; it's hard to go to Irish peoples houses if you

don't have language. ... I think we bring some happiness here, we are very open, they re quite closed, Irish people. Marcelo, Brazil

“ In the north, not untypically for relatively closed communities that reproduce political and sectarian social differences, anyone from 'outside', even if it is from a community in the same city, could find it hard to fit in. Also a certain segregation in the workplace spills into restrictions on opportunities for socialising beyond work. A social life dominated by a pub culture also presents barriers:

“ ... This country has opened doors to migrants but they should also find the way to make them feel at home. Some of us also come from countries that had wars and have lost friends and family and were not trying to cause any trouble ... If I don't speak to you I don't know what makes you laugh, I don't know what makes you cry, I don't know what makes you happy, I don't know your history... ...But in Belfast, you see the problem I think is, See the problem is that if you did not go to school with them and grow up with them (murmur of agreement), you can not break into that friendship, they will call for you and say lets to go for drink but that's as far as it goes...even if I try to make new friends its difficult. I am glad I have sisters!” Sherley, Liberia

“ Our community is the Polish community. We are meeting up, talking on the street and in the shop... that is our community. With Irish people you can more talk about what have you been drinking yesterday and what are you going to drink at the weekend. They were interested at the beginning and they were asking questions. Now we are here too long. Lucasz, Poland.

“ In my case, in Ireland I have more acquaintances. When I initially came I was open and I wanted to mix with other people and socialize with other people. At first I innocently opened up, but with the time I realized that the friendships weren't developing so it made me become more withdrawn and gave up on trying to make friends because I had this preconception that I couldn't make friends ... At first I didn't want to use racism as an excuse, but people I had met at school, when I'd see them in the street, they wouldn't say hi or smile and I thought “did they not see me? Am I invisible?” But I don't know if it is the culture, I have found that the people that would say hello in the street are international students. Student, Nigeria

“ I have been here for more than 10 years and I can't say I have a friend that I can trust no



matter what. I have friends in Africa I grew up with when I was little and I know still today they are friends even if I don't talk to them in months or years, but here I have had friends and I've tried but for things they would do and say I just gave up on the friendships. It doesn't mean that I don't get along with them, I do get along.

**Lynn, Liberia**

**“ We have just friends here from Poland..I have colleagues from work, but we don't meet outside from work; they know each other, they go together..they don't invite us; but only like a Christmas party..that is why it is quite difficult to find people..I don't expect big friendship, but it is quite difficult I don't have a friend here from Ireland. Only at work we talk to people, after work I know they meet together and go to houses.**Jovita, Poland

**“ We have nice neighbours, some of them like to party, but we don't have much time for contact with them. We don't feel a part of the community as we don't go to the pub.”**  
**Joanna, Poland**

**“ I don't know many other people, mostly Polish. There are three families I would see at weekends. I have friends in Belfast, so I go there to their houses. Sometimes it is dangerous to shop ...because my friends tell me, we go to a shop and sit in grass and some girls 15-16 years old and my friends said, don't look to girls, don't catch their eyes or there will be problem, you know if they've been drinking. But it was soon after that football match (Windsor Park) , and so my friends lived on the street where there were houses, you know with windows broken from bricks and people has to leave their houses so maybe that is why they were worried. My friends at this time, even people broke the door and went into the house, and my friend put a blanket at the window in case someone threw a stone. Now, she still lives there but her friend's boyfriend's parents moved because they were afraid.** Paulena, Poland

**“ A startling number of people had, or knew someone who had, either their person or property physically attacked, never mind verbally abused ('that one is normal'). While many comment that migrants could perhaps do more to 'join in', even when attempts are made to do so the feeling is often one of frustration, with the effect of 'pushing' people coming from outside back into their own communities. The overall impact of a reluctance to engage with new and diverse communities allows for parallel (and community) lives to become entrenched.**

**While** the character of the close knit community can be supportive at times it can also be intimidating and sectarian differences become well known to visitors. Often people tell of different experiences of racism in the host communities in different parts of the north, with east and west Belfast being the most commonly cited places of difference and the legacy of paramilitarism another factor the migrant worker must contend with.

**“ I heard yesterday a man got shot in Belfast but I think the situation is getting better between Catholics and Protestants ... but I was going to \_\_\_\_\_ bar, all Catholics at work were saying “oh don't go there, its so dangerous”, but I've just been there playing pool. So I was going there, and of course nothing happened... We can't be like that.. I don't think about it.** Jovita, Poland

**“ I think we Lithuanian people could do more to meet with Irish people, because they are very friendly.**  
**Renata, Lithuania**

**“ When I first came here (as a kid), we had a friend that told us about the bands on the 12th of July and that people would follow them, so we decided to go and see them and people started to shout racist comments to us “there's no black in the union jack, so shoot them out” and would pour drinks and make monkey noises. And I would go home and tell my parents “I really like these people, why don't they like us?” I'd go to see the bands because I was a friend of those people and I would think that the bands was something organised in NI for everybody, but I didn't understand that that was actually creating another division... where I used to live something happened a guy attacked my family, we had to move the police had to evacuate my family from the house, and in the whole neighbourhood, nobody saw anything; and they were all standing there watching... As a child, back home, when we seen white people we would want to know them and bring them into our home, but I think it's in our culture, we are more open, whereas here people just keep to themselves; like in Christmas or a big event we'd all come together, neighbours, the community; but I think that the communities are dying in Northern Ireland. The more there is a division, the more they don't want to know anybody else. And this is not only towards migrants, but also amongst themselves, they don't want to know other (new) people. If they were strong as a community, they would welcome people and say “this is what we are and what we do”.** Sherley, Liberia

## Social life, family and community

“ In the past I've had good neighbours and very bad neighbours. In the first place I lived the neighbours helped me to set everything in the house when I just moved in. I was having a child then, and they used to come and listen to music and help me painting; I spend like 5 or 6 months in that house. But now I don't really talk to anybody, I just knock on the next door neighbours and ask them what day do I put the bins out. ..

...This is because about 5 or 6 years ago, some guys got into my house in East Belfast, I don't know how they got in the house, there were three of them, and they started shouting that their auntie said that there was noise coming from my house... I said “get out of my house! How did you get in here, you don't have the key to my house, I'll call the police”, and they said “oh, really, do you want to call the police and see what happens?” Then my friends started to look a bit nervous and one of them grabbed her child and took him out of the house. One of my friends then came and told me in my ear that those were paramilitaries and could shoot me or slap me around, don't say anything, be careful. But I was still being cheeky, I was telling them to get out of my house, and that I wasn't making noise, I was just trying to fix the place. Then he shouted “if I hear any noise here again, I'll be back in and you won't be smiling again” and then he left. Then my friends (local girls) warned me and said “don't stay in the house, ask them to move you, because if they come back again you don't know what they are going to do.”

...Now I live close to the \_\_\_\_ bar, on the Ormeau Road, and I these guys were living in a flat below me and were giving me some hassle and other neighbours who I got friendly with told me “if you ever get any trouble or need any help with anything, go to the bar and tell them and they will help you. So I told them that I was getting hassle by these two guys, and they went and had a word with them. That was the only time and I never had any problems again down there. The East is worse for living. **Ann, Liberia.**

“ **The youth attacked a car full of Lithuanians in Newtownards. People were getting their cars broken. I went to the UVF and UDA and they actually sorted it out; when they approached the kids and asked them why they did it, the kids said, “we thought we were doing the community a favour”.** Andrius, Lithuania

“ I'd stick to the South of the city, the university and student areas, like off Lisburn Road. Don't go to the West. I'd never go to the Shankill Road, when I've had to, I've passed it very quickly. Student, Nigeria

“ **Well, I met a black girl that had been living in London, and she told me that she lived in the Shankill and she loved it, so maybe things are changing, well, just a little bit.** Ann, Liberia.

“ I've just lived in West Belfast (Shankill) and I've never had any problems, all my neighbours are good. Gedi, Lithuania.

“ **When I first moved here, I was living in Antrim Road and there were Philippines people living next door to me and the local people had smashed their windows, and I was told that a few years before there was a Philippine family that were renting a house and when they bought the house the local people burnt it... I remember walking in Antrim Road and someone shouting something at me but I didn't know much English at the time so I didn't know what they said. But in West Belfast most people would be fine, only there are some people that would support Basques and when I say I'm Spanish they wouldn't like it, but in general it's a lot better.** Raquel, Spain

“ I came home from town and saw my family on the street. All their stuff, their bags and they were just standing there on the street. It was terrible. All the Roma had to move from the Village (south Belfast)...some went back to Romania but others like me moved around Holy Lands, near the Ormeau Road. Here it's really good. Mostly students, you know sometimes they're drinking hey, Romania! But there's no problem. **Neil, Romania**

**Kimono,** Cameroon, perceived differences between communities in terms of how they reacted to new migrants attempting to settle...

“ **I found Northern Ireland more welcoming than in England but there is a big difference depending on where you live..I stayed in the Catholic and in the Protestant area and I found that the reason why Catholic people were more welcoming is because they travel and they have consciousness about racism, apparently back in the days where they said no Catholics they'd say no Blacks, so they know what it's like to feel rejection, so they were more welcoming...I know the people from my street .. even the kids would ask you where are you from, is it Jamaica, and they would try to make conversation, whereas the kids from the Protestant area wouldn't talk to you...you don't know who your neighbour is.. they won't give you the chance to know them..or they would either shout some racist comment or say**



**something nasty. And I don't know why it is like that, but I have lived in the Protestant area for about four years and in the catholic area for like four years as well and I know there are differences...**

“ One day I finished work in the kitchen job at night and had to walk home and I met this Somali guy in the Albert Bridge and I mentioned I was going to that area (East Belfast) and he told me to be careful. Not long after I saw these guys that I think they were drinking, and they started to walk towards me. And then I greeted to them, 'are you alright, mate?', but they wouldn't answer me, instead they started to smash bottles against the wall and I started to run and they run after me until they saw me running back to the city centre.

**racism** doesn't respect neat boundaries

“ **When we first moved into our house (West Belfast) there were kids that broke our gate at the back of the house, so we called the police, but now we've got to know more people in the community we know now that we don't need to call the police we can just tell the people in the community, like one time our car was hit and we told the local people and they found out who it was and they came and gave us money to get it repaired. I don't really get much racism towards me, just one time a teenager said some things to me, but now I just cross the road if I see someone; I think the teenagers think they can do what they want because they are still minors, but back home people wouldn't take it.** Marian, Philippines

**Kin:** We face a lot of attitude, lets be honest, we face a lot,

**Andrew:** That one is common, throwing cans, tin cans at you,

**Kin:** Yeah Eggs at the car, eggs on the street. On Glen Road, west Belfast, they threw eggs at my car, you know the way they smell. It messes not just with the car,

**Sherley:** It messes with your mind, emotionally,

**Kin:** It does

**Andrew:** yeah, that one's common, beer tins, coke cans when you re on your bike

**Sherely:** my father was urinated on!

**Sherley:** You're like, I am a nice person, I am not intimidating you, why are you creating this barriers ...cos of the problems here, people have become very like, stay in your place, and I'll stay in my place, and if something happens to you I will like pretend that I didn't see it

**Kin:** yea that's right, that's very common ..The Irish have to give us a chance to know us, to talk to us. It's true many people, many black people or people of colour can try and move away or be on their own, which is no good, we should all be mixed together, but they are forcing us to have our own communication in one corner which is very bad.

**And** from those margins it appears migrant workers are most often observers of the sectarian political set up of the north, with no clear means to engage with it

**When I speak to people here and they are talking about politics it is the same story than in Poland. The same kind of complaints.** Bartek, Poland.

“ This thing with Catholics and Protestants here is ridiculous. .. I think here it's not really about religion it's more to do being with Irish or British. I've been asked what religion am I and I have told them I am Christian, I like both, it's just small differences; they are the same. The way politics are here is very different than back home, I find it very strange. **Gedi, Lithuania**

“ **I think people vote here depending on if they are catholic or protestant, but back home we would vote based on other arguments**

“ You see when people here talk about 'community', like my community or my community, and it doesn't matter if their loyalists, or people calling themselves Republican socialists, when they talk about my community its Catholic, Irish, Nationalist, or British and Protestant. It leaves no room for me. I tend to think citizenship is a more useful way for us to define ourselves. **Raul, Brazil**

“ **I see that here you would never hear someone say they are a citizens of the world, they're still too stuck on the British-Irish identity, so when you have that feeling of nationality, it's hard to not think about nationality at all, and welcome other people's nationalities. When you're opening the worlds markets up, you have to do it for all the people of the world too, for other cultures. Globalization should not be only about economy. But if I'm stuck in my nationality and my identity, it's hard to move forward.** Raquel, Spain.

“ But the only thing I'm thinking is... maybe from the course I've done, you see some family they are still passing the sectarian attitude to their children. You see that there are people that can't go to the

## Social life, family and community

“ other side and the same from the other side they can't play with them, the world is so simple everyone should just move on. I asked my lecturer about the crisis in Northern Ireland and asked how many people had died and he said three thousand and something and if a crisis happened in Nigeria ten thousand people could die in one day, you see what I'm saying? And we can move on. So why can't the people of Northern Ireland just move on? Everyone here should be living comfortably, have a car, work, live your life, because the population is so small and it's not the people's faults, it's the lies and the politicians.

**Ismail, Nigeria.**

“ Yeah, politics here are around the same topic. I think that they have people shut up. They've made them to be too interested in the catholic and protestant thing, they don't think about socialism, workers or the green movement, they are too concentrated in the Irish-British thing. When I first moved here I thought that people were very conscious of politics, because they are all day talking about it, but in the end after a while I just realized that people are just stuck in the past and they just see what there was back in the past, they're still isolated: if you were born in a certain area you stay in a certain circle of people, they don't see any further. I think they're keeping people shut up giving them money (benefits) for not going to the streets and claiming their rights as workers and citizens, so I see there's a lot of conscious for being Irish or British but there is none for other political areas that there should be. Raquel, Spain.

**But** there is nevertheless optimism from many people who have been excluded based on an openness and a commitment fostered by the idea that sectarianism won't somehow magically 'cure itself' but that an influx of people with different views, habits and norms, can help in the process of community integration. Paradoxically, in other words, integration comes not by ignoring social differences but by recognising their importance – the new norm will not be based upon either monoculturalism or bi-culturalism, but something new.

“ When I first came here I didn't really travel out of Belfast, but now I have been to Dublin and London and it's totally different and I hope that will get here, because now there are a lot of more black people in Belfast and the locals will get used to it, but just right now they are still a bit scared of them coming to steal their jobs, etc.

“ It is so good that people are now moving together, I think I can see they are each others neighbourhoods, they are getting on with each other..And I think, to be honest I do think, with the help of the foreigners into the country it is merging both sides. Because if you can relate to me and if someone from this side comes to my house, and someone from the other side comes to my house; others can see that and get away from that; I think we are bringing something, we are opening up. ..I think the road is good for Ireland.'

**Kin, Nigeria.**

“ I've found some people that have actually welcomed me and open their arms to me and that makes me feel hope and that's what I work with and that make me forget the negative part, because if you're too bitter it makes you withdraw and you end up just like the people who are making you like that. I don't let anything negative bring me down because I'm a positive person and I have positive friends. They've learnt about me, they have kind of adopted my culture and they make me want to stay here. So you've got to work with people that make it easy for you, you can't blame or judge everybody for what few people do or for their ignorance.

**Sherley, Liberia**

# Being Home

## Could this place ever be your home?

“ It is a hard question. We are here only four years but when we go to Poland for two weeks we feel like we must go back to Ireland. We miss here too. When you go somewhere and stay so long then sometimes neither place feels like home any more. Where you feel good that is your home. We have everything here. Karol, Poland.

“ We're like the Irish, quite family orientated...we have to think of home and send something back to help a little... even though it can be hard here. We have to care for home...but at same time care for here as well, pay the rent and bills, you know. People always think its better over here. If you haven't been somewhere you think the grass is always greener, so people believe you have a job and ...expect you to save and help a little, which is very normal in our society, you know, to look after each other. Kin, Nigeria

“ I'm not regretting that I came here but sometimes there's no place like home. I can say that the treatment as a foreigner you can see there is a big difference especially if you're quiet, so sometimes then, as a foreigner, you just keep silent because you are just a foreigner. Marian, Philippines.

“ Sometimes I think that me staying in this country is just wasting my time. I have to be honest, I've come here. I've studied. If I went back to Nigeria I would be working in a high place. I would go back and give them the knowledge I've gained ... but it is different when you've got a family. You can't just move.

Ismail, Nigeria

“ I think that home will be here. It is easier for a family. We only have to buy school uniforms for the kids here. Sending three kids to school costs a fortune in Poland. Opticians, dentists, doctors, prescriptions- all that is very expensive back in Poland. Malgorzata, Poland.

“ I miss home a lot and call a lot...we call this our second home. Andrew, Ghana.

“ It is important to speak Polish at home to teach him (my son) basic Polish so he can speak to his Granddad and Grandmother and keep Polish traditions. Some day they might go back to Poland. Monika, Poland.

“ This is my home now. And Ireland is beautiful.

“ I like this country. I think I'll stay...for me life is easier, less worry to have what you need. Even at home when you have a job you have to work out how to pay for rent and electricity. Here you can manage a little easier. Gedi, Lithuania.

“ I would like to go home yes, but you know, when you are an expatriate, when you think about your country, you remember only the good things. So when you go back you go, oh I didn't remember that. But yes, I would go back tomorrow but the longer you stay...I have children now. So it's more difficult to go back. Marcio, Brazil.

“ I don't think I will stay here. I'll go back but I don't know when. I'm not thinking in buying a house here, just working, save money and go back to Lithuania. And my boyfriend would think the same. Inga, Lithuania.

“ I would like to stay here. I like it here and people are nice... where I'm from people can be very angry. Here it's nicer. But I don't know if my family are planning to stay.

“ I don't miss home because home is here. I left Poland 22 years ago and I think that when you are young the friendship bonds you develop are not very strong. I had always been with my parents. I went where they lived and they went where I was going so I do miss Poland as a country but not as home. I think that the home is where your work and family is so I think it is here. Daniel, Poland.

“ You would have to ask him (Jakub, 2 years old) in 10 years time.

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# What should be done?

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**Throughout** the project people were asked to share ideas about what could or should be done regarding challenges that were commonly voiced by migrant workers. Their suggestions also ask questions of local government, employers, social organisations such as community organisations and trade unions and our conclusions below are drawn out from the testimonies and our experiences from the project.

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## Moving towards the progressive workplace.

“Employers need to take a no nonsense, zero tolerance policy towards racism. If the boss has an attitude that ‘I cannot take this in my workplace’, he will create a sense of respect... I should be happy to come into work; there should be awareness in work.”

“I think that all international workers should have like an introduction, like something in work where people can meet each other, to get to know each other and be more aware of the each other as workers; for people to be more friendly at work, to be more sociable”.

“Employers should know that people have the right to an interpreter. It's the employer's responsibility that people can understand what is going on.”

“There are people can not get their qualification to get them recognised; Is there a centre where they can get the qualification classified?... something set up like that would help a lot of people. I know a lot of people with degrees; they have the qualifica-

tion, but they can not get the job. They are stigmatised if they are foreigners. I don't want to use the words racist. The government must know that people who are allowed to come here, have qualification are having difficulty finding work. What is set in place to make it easier?”

**Society:** participants, while optimistic about the future, highlight the need for a 'deliberate and active' approach to integration, for political leadership, a broader education and awareness, and for working people and their families to find common ground.

“I think the politicians have a lot of work to do. I think people like you, with something like this, should be merged with Irish people. You've done it with foreigners; next time it should be with Irish people through networking”.

“Politicians have to try and be positive and not negative with foreigners round election time.”

“You can't just say its education. We need to create awareness...wasn't it a law student help organised the Roma attacks”

“Maybe you could also interview local people and ask them about their relation with migrants, like if they find it hard to communicate with them, etc. because maybe we think that they're scared of black people but maybe they could say something that would clarify things”.

“Maybe that's why I came to this meeting; to meet you because I wanted to meet people from here, to know people from other countries, and not just talk about work, but other things, have a con-



versation, just to meet people from your programme, and maybe do something. Of course I can go to the pub, but I'd like to do something else".

**“ In the current economic and political climate this need to co-operate is more pressing than before. Participants have recognised that there are many areas or 'estates' where there is much disillusionment. Despite the growth from 1998, Northern Ireland still contained areas of unemployment and poverty that remained higher than rest of UK. It has been in some of these areas where migrant workers have felt less safe.**

**“** I think these attacks have more to do with drinking alcohol and they wouldn't really happen during the day. Maybe these young people should get involved in some kind of community training or apprenticeship to keep them busy in the evening or weekend which is when these things happen. Instead of increasing the police control, maybe it'd be better if the youth was taught about other people in the world."

**“ With the onset of recession and cuts, the temporary, casual and poorly paid job promises to be a more frequent destination for both (for ) locally born and migrant worker and, in the absence of strong co-operation among people who face this future together, people's rights in work and in turn quality of life threaten to be degraded further. Migration will continue to be a factor in a globalised world and workplace.**

**“** People have to develop an awareness around class and also the importance of migrant workers as a force; people with good work, with contracts, with proper pay can contribute to society; this is a social good. It's clear here too people have very bad

jobs, or no jobs, and so it's difficult to see you have a power or what you have with other people. But workers, whether they are from here or foreign shouldn't see themselves as somehow 'low', but proud because it is them that run the economy".

**“ The organisations that do good things, like these -what do you call them, trade unions? - need to get the information out to people so people know where they can get support".**

**“** Success in developing this requires a willingness of social organisations such as trade unions to go beyond traditional roles. Fighting for improved legislative relations, building membership, or providing a service are important but not sufficient to deal with the forms of exploitation peculiar to migrant workers in a stubbornly sectarian society. As a response to the changing nature of work they are important, but no substitute for direct work and community based activity.

In an era of increasing work/life insecurity, an enduring sectarianism that can be masked by talk of 'the community' and that leaves little room for new ideas on the political economy, contributions to our society by migrant workers and their families should be valued as part of a movement towards full citizenship for all. This requires changing social relations between workers and their neighbours, their employers, and those who make decisions about our lives. Hence community participation involves fighting for workers and their workplace rights that are also citizenship rights, which for us means having control over your own destiny.

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**Migrant Workers Action Research Project,  
February 2011.**

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## Acknowledgements

### We would like to say a special thank you to

CAIRDE, Armagh and Community Relations Council for their assistance in conducting interviews, training and transcription for the project,  
University of Strathclyde  
Ballynafeigh Community Association,  
Creative Workers Co-operative,

Valeria Pulignano, University of Leuven; Adam Mrozowicki, University of Wroclaw, and Raul Arujo, Art and Conflict International, for inspiration behind the project,

and sincere thanks to the CONSENSUS Initiative of the Belfast Unemployed Centre for supporting the publication and launch of the booklet.

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The project was facilitated through the INDEPENDENT WORKERS UNION, a new independent trade union fighting for the rights of workers and their families in Ireland, north and south. JOIN US to fight for the rights of you and your colleagues in work and in the community or for more information on or copies of this booklet:  
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